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# The Metropolitan Planning Organization 1982 - 1983 Biennial Report



Montachusett Regional Planning Commission



Interstate 190, Leominster

# Introduction to the Region



## The Montachusett Region

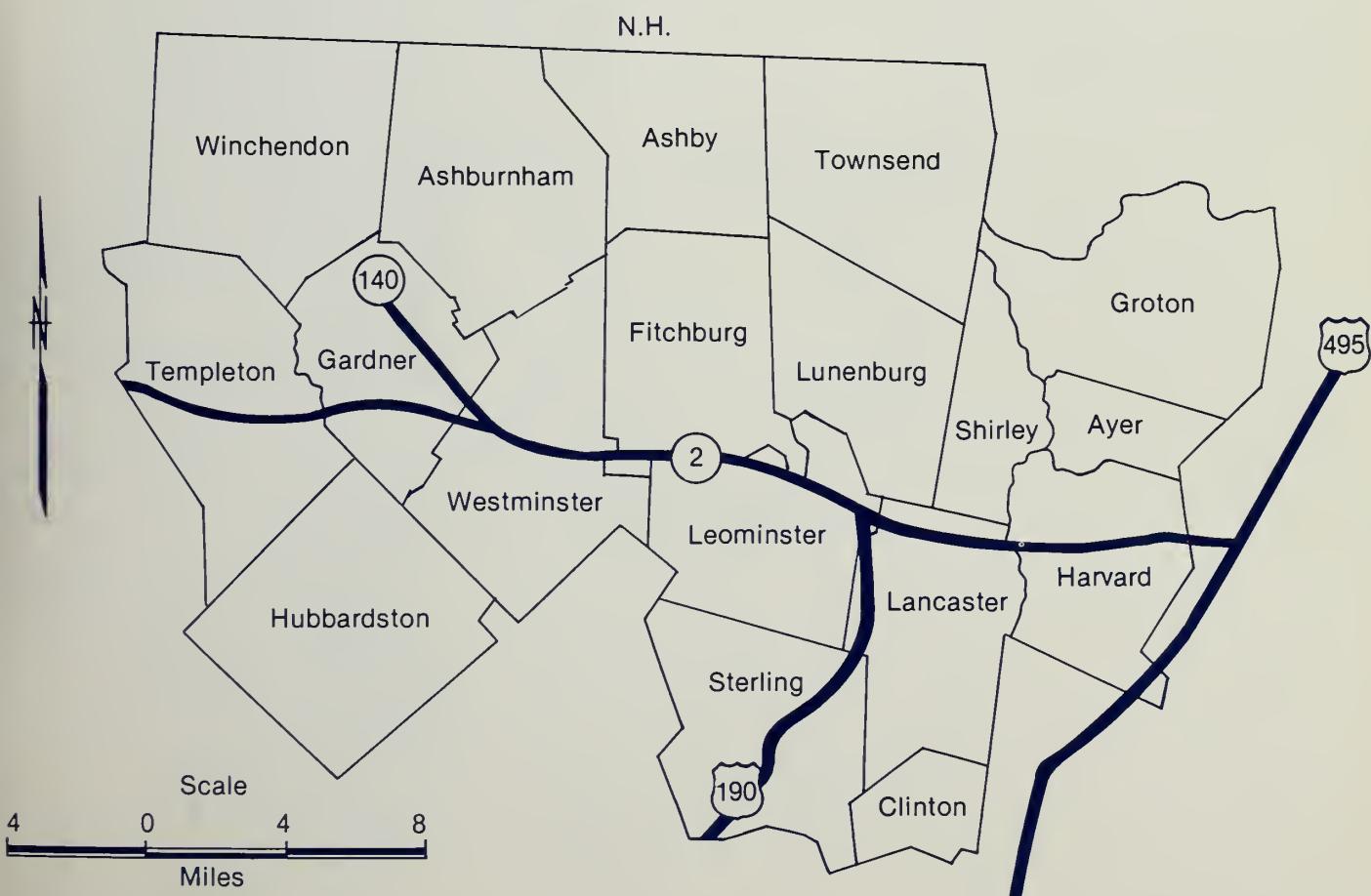
The area served by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission is located in north-central Massachusetts, less than 50 miles west of the Boston Metropolitan Area, 25 miles north of Worcester, and contiguous with the New Hampshire border. It encompasses approximately 513 square miles and has a population of approximately 189,000. The region is traversed by two interstate highways and two primary limited access highways. Recently completed I-190 connects the Worcester area with Route 2, located in the Fitchburg-Leominster Urbanized Area. Route 2, the region's major east-west facility, connects with Route 140 near Gardner and extends north into New Hampshire. While to the east, Route 2 provides easy access

to I-495 as it forms an outer belt around the Boston Urbanized Area. The urban/rural character of the region serves as a major attraction to the growing expansion of high-tech industry and manufacturing west of Route 128.

This publication is divided into two sections. The first section (pages 1-11) comprises the MPO transportation report, while the second section (pages 12-20) comprises the MRPC agency report.



**The Montachusett Region**

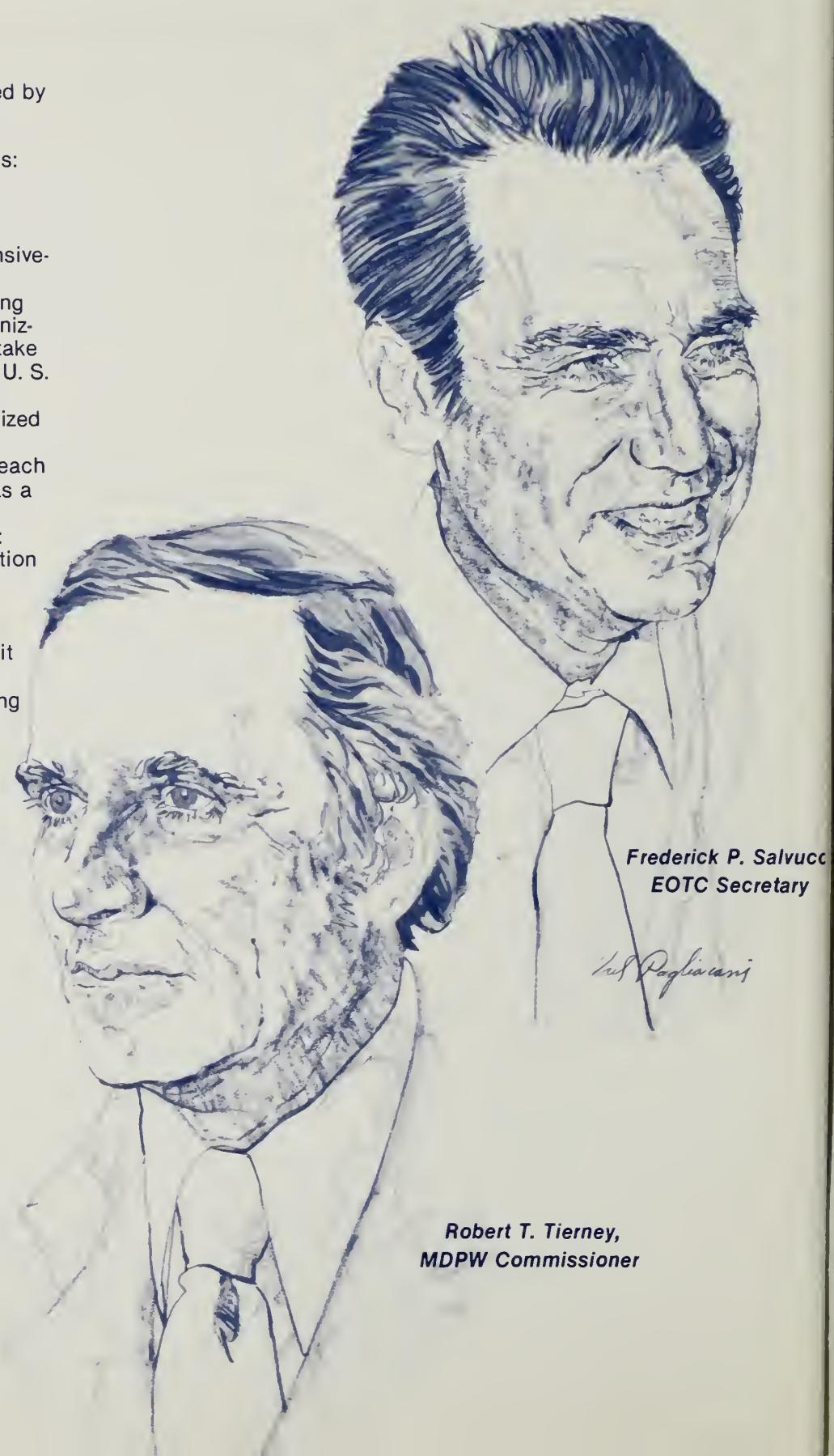


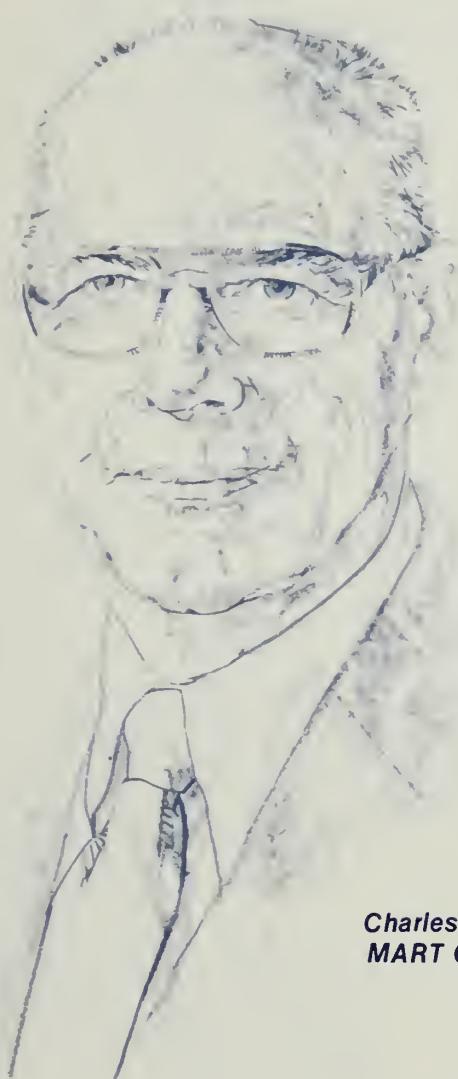
# The Metropolitan Planning Organization

## Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was created by Federal Regulations for the purpose of establishing a 3C transportation planning process: continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive. This process results in plans and programs consistent with the comprehensively planned development of the urbanized area. The MPO serving the Fitchburg-Leominster Urbanized Area meets periodically to take formal actions required by the U. S. Department of Transportation. Actions of the MPO are formalized through endorsement by designated representatives of each member organization, known as a Committee of Signatories. The MPO consists of the following:

- Executive Office of Transportation and Construction
- Massachusetts Department of Public Works
- Montachusett Regional Transit Authority
- Montachusett Regional Planning Commission





**Charles McKean,  
MART Chairman**



**Donald Royea,  
MRPC Chairman**

#### **Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization Signatories**

Frederick P. Salvucci	EOTC Secretary
Robert T. Tierney	MDPW Commissioner
Donald Royea	MRPC Chairman
Charles McKean	MART Chairman

#### **MPO Sub-Signatory Committee Members**

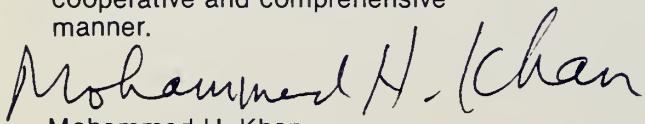
Mathew Coogan	Under Secretary, EOTC, representing Secretary Salvucci
Michael D. Meyer	Director, BTP&D, representing Commissioner Tierney
Mohammed H. Khan	Director, MRPC, representing Chairman Royea
Mohammed H. Khan	Administrator, MART, representing Mayor McKean

# Management and Support

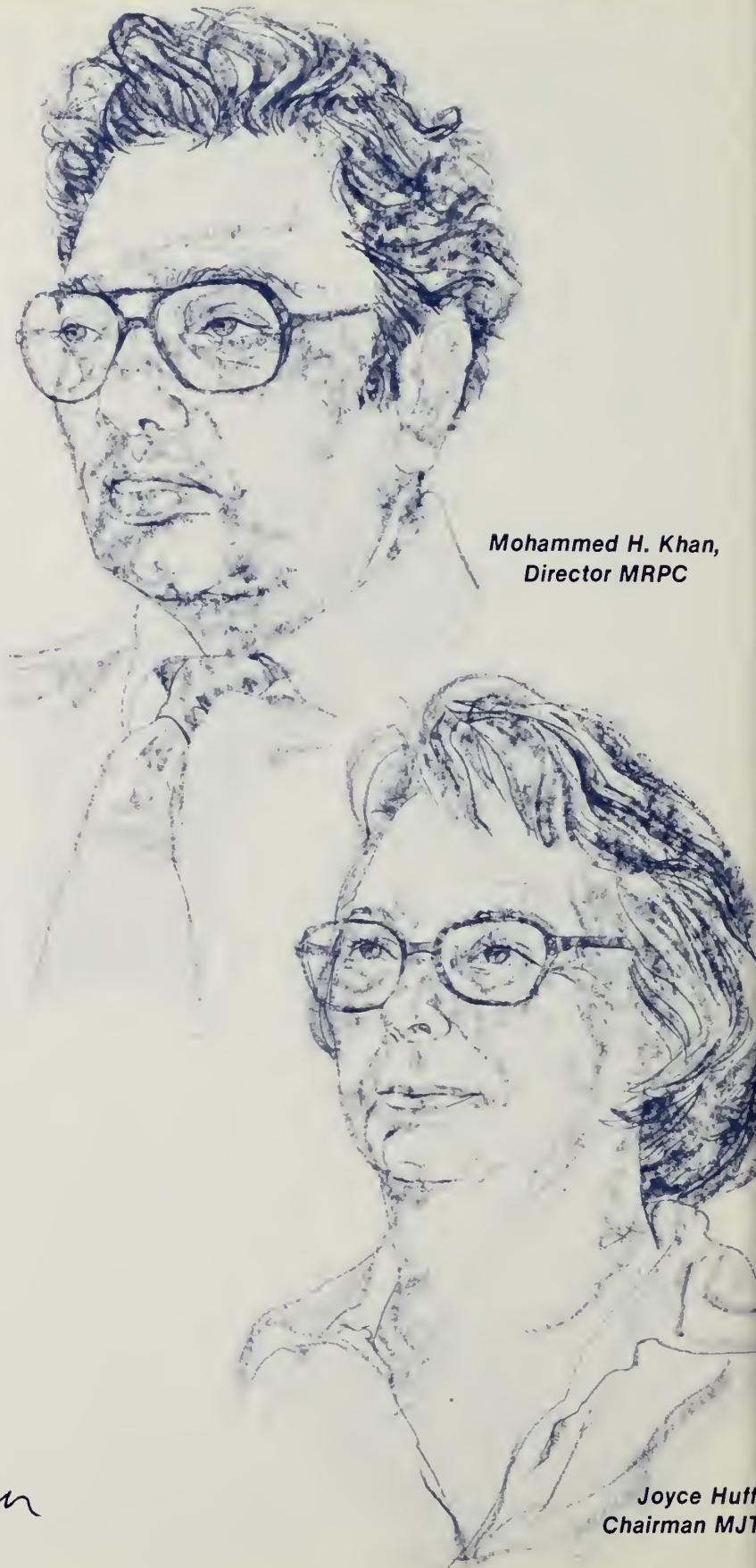


## A Message from the Director:

During the past two years, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission has made important progress towards improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the region's transportation network. The Route 140 bypass of the Town of Gardner and the recent opening of I-190, our expressway connection to the Massachusetts Turnpike through Leominster and Sterling, have not only provided excellent economic opportunities for our region but also greatly reduced congestion and truck traffic in these communities. In addition, construction of a major interchange at Routes 2 and 31 in Westminster and Fitchburg is underway. This will greatly facilitate traffic flow on Route 2 and provide for Fitchburg's economic and industrial growth. On a smaller scale, technical assistance to local communities is of extreme importance. MRPC staff was involved in various studies evaluating many of our communities. Recently the towns of Athol, Petersham, Phillipston, and Royalston were assigned to the MRPC for transportation planning purposes by the Commonwealth. Studies to increase the capacity and safety of traffic operations have been conducted by our staff. We have identified problem highways and intersections throughout the region. These projects will be scheduled for future improvement. Factors such as air quality impacts, energy conservation, improved transit service, and improved commuter rail service continue to be major concerns as part of a comprehensive multi-modal transportation planning process. With the assistance of an energetic citizen advisory committee (MJTC), and cooperation from the State, the challenge of meeting the changing needs of the region can be accomplished in a cooperative and comprehensive manner.



Mohammed H. Khan,  
Director MRPC

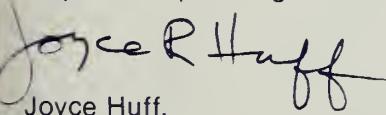


Mohammed H. Khan,  
Director MRPC

Joyce Huff  
Chairman MJTC

## About the MJTC:

The Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) provides the important link between the citizens of the Montachusett region and the transportation planning process, as implemented by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). As chairperson of MJTC, I would like to encourage each community to actively participate in this process. Transportation improvement decisions are not only based upon State and local policies, but on active public participation. The MJTC provides an effective forum for the discussion of all regional transportation issues. Regular meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the MRPC conference room. Representatives of each MRPC community are nominated by the Mayor, Board of Selectmen or Planning Board to membership in the Committee. There are also organizational memberships representing various groups such as the Board of Realtors, Nashua River Watershed Association, and the Amalgamated Transit Union. Other interested individuals are encouraged to attend meetings and participate in this important decision making process. Public participation is the cornerstone of a dynamic and responsible planning effort.

  
Joyce Huff,  
Chairman MJTC

## Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee

Community	Appointed by Selectmen or Mayor	Appointed by Planning Board
Ashburnham	Elaine McCarthy	
Ashby	Dexter Gilchrest	Walter Woodruff
Athol	William Wrigley	
Ayer	Ruth Proctor	
Clinton	Paul Garofoli	
Fitchburg	Jeffrey George	Joyce Huff
Gardner	Clifford Beebe	
Groton		
Harvard	Joanne Williamson	
Hubbardston		
Lancaster	Daniel C. Loraditch	Paul Airoldi
Leominster		
Lunenburg	James Mann	Michael Davolio
Petersham		
Phillipston	Donn Clifford	
Royalston		
Shirley	Albert Chevrette	Robert Goyette
Sterling	Dorothy Rockwell	
Templeton		
Townsend		Walter Rolf
Westminster		David Mathieu
Winchendon		David Landry
		Arthur Tatro
<b>Ex-Officio Members</b>		
David M. Luce	MDPW, BTP&D	
Jeffrey K. Young	EOTC	
John Fitzgerald	MDPW, District 3	
Walter Rolf	MRPC	
Barry Porter	DEQE	
<b>Organization Members</b>		
Joyce Huff	Nashua River Watershed Association	
Walter Woodruff	Fitchburg League of Women Voters	
Joseph Raimon	Northern Worcester County Board of Realtors	
Donald Frigoletto	Amalgamated Transit Union #690	
John Maciocci	Fitchburg Airport Commission	
Bedford Kaddy	Fitchburg Chamber of Commerce	
	Fitchburg Council on Aging	

# The Transportation Plan



The Transportation Plan, completed in November of 1979 and updated in February of 1983, provides the basic framework for implementing future short-range and long-range transportation and air quality improvements. In addition, it sets the basic transportation goals and objectives for the region; which are consistent with the long-range land use plan and the social, economic and environmental policies of the region.

The Transportation Plan consists of two major elements: a long-range element and a short-range element. The long-range element defines long-range goals and objectives, identifies new transportation facilities and major changes to existing facilities. The short-range element consists mostly of Transportation Systems Management (TSM) projects. These projects are less capital intensive than long-range projects, consider all modes of transportation as alternatives, and are designed to increase the efficiency of existing facilities on a short-range basis. Examples of TSM projects are: traffic flow improvements, intersection capacity and signalization improvements, bikeways and carpooling programs.

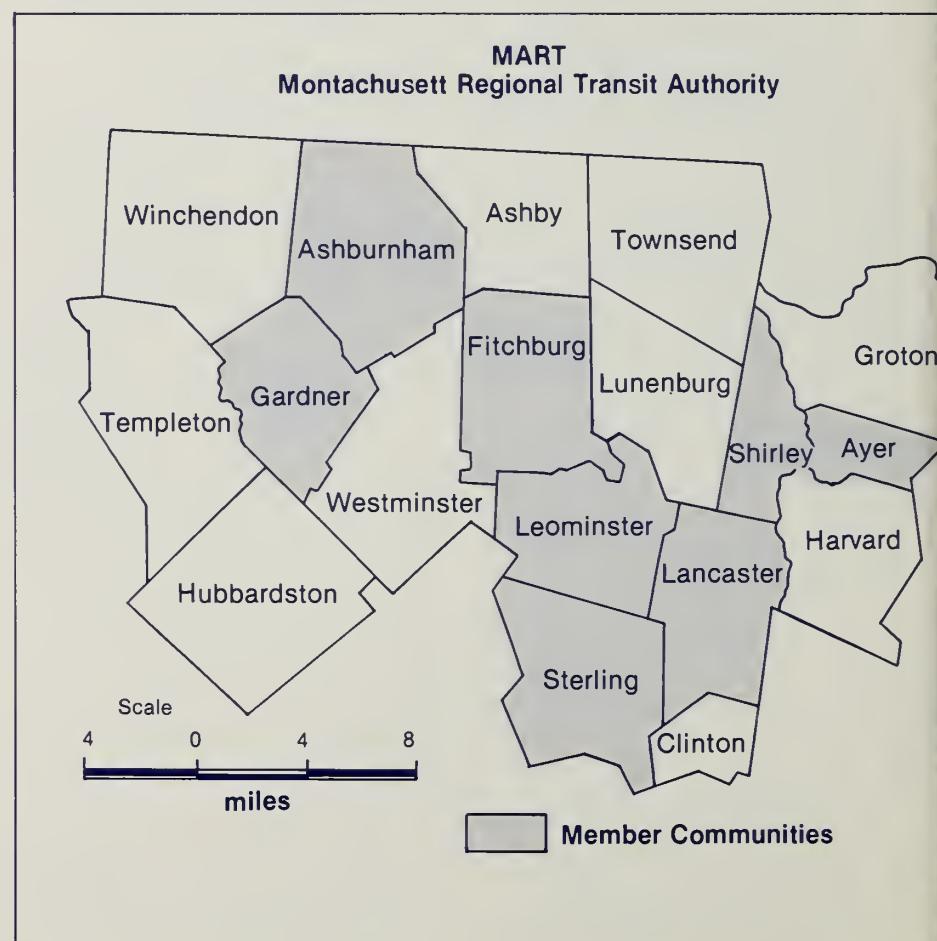
The Transportation Plan decisions reflect the federally certified 3C (comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing) process and are based upon Federal, State, and local policies, detailed technical analysis, and citizen participation.

## Transit

The Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) was formed in August of 1978 by the Cities of Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner. Since that time, six additional communities have become members of MART. These communities are: Shirley, Ashburnham, Ayer, Lancaster, Hubbardston, and Sterling. There are now 11 fixed service routes in Leominster/Fitchburg and two fixed routes in Gardner. Special service is provided to the elderly and handicapped

throughout the service region with wheelchair lift-equipped vans. Since June 1983, through the use of the Transit Development Program (TDP), MART has been actively working with local communities to expand service throughout the region. Service from Fitchburg/Leominster to Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner was provided in response to student commuter needs. In addition, a number of long-term capital improvement decisions were made during this period. The MART Advisory Board voted to construct a bus maintenance garage facility and intermodal transfer facility in Fitchburg. These two facilities alone will cost over four million dollars. This represents a substantial commitment for mass transit in the region. Furthermore, MART contracts for the purchase of three thirty foot wheelchair lift-equipped buses, two

thirty-five foot buses, and six lift-equipped vans were awarded during this fiscal year. Based upon the growing MART bus system, a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Management Program was initiated in order to implement and monitor an on-going review process for the MART System. This process consists of an evaluation of fixed route management operations and maintenance facilities, implementation of a life cycle cost program, preventative maintenance program, parts and equipment inventory, comprehensive safety and sensitivity driver training program, and a study to analyze innovative revenue sources for funding improvements to mass transit. This review process will provide a well-defined, goal oriented management approach to obtain the highest quality transit service affordable in the MART region.



## **Highway Plan Refinement**

As noted in the Transportation Plan Update, Route 12 and Route 13 in Fitchburg and Leominster are the most heavily congested auto routes in the region. During 1983, as a refinement to the highway plan, MRPC carried out a traffic operations study on Route 12. The results of this study pointed out numerous capacity and safety problems. Possible solutions include signalization, improved pavement marking, signing, improved lighting, and the addition of left turn lanes.

Additional studies that identify capacity and safety deficiencies for the purpose of highway refinement include:

Traffic and accident data for traffic signal installation in Fitchburg and at John Fitch Highway and Pearl Street;

Intersection assessments at Routes 140/101 in Gardner, Route 119 at South and Spaulding Streets in Townsend, and Dana Hill Road and Route 140 in Sterling; Traffic analysis to assess the impact of development in Lancaster and on Princeton Road, Route 31 in Fitchburg;

Speed zoning study to examine recommendations for speed limit changes on Route 62, Clinton Road;

Traffic analysis on Route 12 in the Town of Sterling to determine the impact of I-190;

Isochronal mapping study to determine travel time to and from regional centers of activity;

Regional accident study to document an investigation into the major causes of accidents throughout the region.

## **Rail**

January, 1980, marked the beginning of commuter rail service to the Region. Under contract with MART, The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), and its operator, the Boston and Maine Railroad, provide commuter rail service from Boston westward to the town of Gardner. This service provides over one hundred trips

weekly between the Montachusett Region and the North Station in Boston; with stops at Gardner, Fitchburg, North Leominster, Shirley, Ayer, and Littleton. Average daily commuter ridership between 1982 and 1983 increased 43 percent, while total monthly riders for the same period increased 55 percent.

In addition to daily commuter rail service, MART and the MBTA instituted a "SKI MASSACHUSETTS" program every Saturday and Sunday during the winter season. This program provides easy access from the Boston Metropolitan area to the ski slopes of Mount Watatic and Mount Wachusett. Riders arrive at the Fitchburg Station and are taken by special MART shuttle buses to the ski slopes for a complete day of activities.

In addition, extensive freight service is provided to the Montachusett Region by the Boston and Maine Corporation, with the Consolidated Rail Corporation and the Providence and Worcester Railroad serving in a lesser capacity.

## **Air Quality**

The passage of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1977 marked the beginning of a national movement to involve Metropolitan Planning Organizations in an effort to reduce air pollution. To accomplish this, Federal regulations require an annual documentation of the conformity of transportation plans and projects with air quality goals. This documentation recognizes air quality goals as an integral part of the planning process and demonstrates that reasonable further progress toward target reductions in automobile emissions is being attained.

Transportation projects are deemed significant from an air quality perspective because they alter the speed, capacity, or vehicle miles of travel of existing highways. The net result is a reduction of carbon monoxide emissions. MRPC efforts to improve air quality include

improvements to mass transit, encouragement of car pooling and other forms of ride-sharing, the establishment of park and ride lots adjacent to bus routes, experimentation with flexible work hours, and the computerization and coordination of traffic signals to improve traffic flow.

## **Airports**

There are six airports in the Montachusett Region that provide service to local and regional business groups and recreational flyers. The largest, Fitchburg Municipal Airport, is a general aviation facility that is open to the public. It also contains a flight school and maintains aircraft hanger storage. The Moore Army Airfield is located at Fort Devens in Ayer and is used exclusively for military operations and flight training. The Gardner Municipal Airport is located in the adjacent Town of Templeton. The remaining three airports are privately owned and are located in Sterling, Groton, and Shirley. These airports are used primarily for recreational and business purposes, including a flight instruction school at Shirley.

## **Bikeways**

The MRPC has been designated with the responsibility of coordinating regional bikeway activities and assisting local communities in their planning efforts. To that end, MRPC has prepared a Regional Bikeway Plan, which establishes a framework for developing bikepaths and outlines several proposed bikeway facilities. Within the last several years, interest in improving bicycle safety and promoting the use of bicycles as a viable alternative to automobile travel has increased. Only through careful planning can the benefits of bicycle travel be realized. More detailed information about bikeway planning can be obtained from the MRPC transportation staff.

# Transportation Improvement Program



## Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a prioritized listing of transportation projects proposed for implementation during the future five fiscal years. This document is the end product of a comprehensive, continuing and cooperative effort to improve the regional transportation system by local officials, the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC), the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), the Massachusetts Department of Public Works (MDPW), and the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC). It is re-

quired to be updated on a yearly basis by MRPC staff in accordance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) regulations. Unless otherwise noted, the MDPW is responsible for the implementation of highway projects.

The following represents a list of prioritized transportation projects (Overall Regional Priorities) which the MJTC determined would offer the most significant benefits to the region. It provides a guideline for State and Federal decision-makers for funding of highway improvements and is recommended by the MJTC for expeditious implementation.

Overall Regional Priorities	
Priority	Project Description
1	Route 2 Reconstruction - Rt. 2, Westminster
	- Rt. 2, Fitchburg
	- Rt. 2, Leominster
2	Barre Road Reconstruction - Barre Rd., Templeton
3	Route 68 Reconstruction - Main St., Gardner
	- Main St., Gardner
4	Route 140 Reconstruction - Rt. 140, Sterling
	New Harbor Rd., Clinton

### Transportation Improvements Implemented During 1982

Project	Cost
1 Route 2, Fitchburg right-of-way	\$3,000,000
2 Bolton Rd., Lancaster preliminary engineering	\$62,000
URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION (UMTA), SECTION 5, fixed route service to Fitchburg/Leominster, and elderly and handicapped dial-a-ride service	\$688,400
UMTA, SECTION 5, COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE, Fitchburg, Leominster, Gardner, Ayer, and Shirley	\$2,200,000
UMTA, SECTION 18, fixed route service to Gardner and dial-a-ride service	\$203,000
3 Route 31, Ashby relocation	\$1,080,000
4 Route 13, Townsend reconstruction	\$208,000
5 Route 2A, Lunenburg reconstruction	\$767,000
6 Route 12, Sterling safety improvement	\$255,000
7 Hale Rd., Hubbardston bridge reconstruction	\$13,000
8 Litchfield St., Leominster reconstruction	\$300,000
Total	\$8,746,400

### Transportation Improvements Implemented During 1983

Project	Cost
9 Route I-190, Sterling landscaping	\$225,000
10 Route 2, Westminster safety upgrading	1,864,854
11 Route 2/31, Fitchburg reconstruction and interchange	8,265,000
12 Route 119, Ashburnham reconstruction	2,282,000
13 Main St., Fitchburg reconstruction	675,000
14 Truck weighing sites, Lancaster safety inspection	453,000
15 Water St., Leominster bridge construction	375,000
Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) Section 5, fixed route service to Fitchburg/Leominster, and elderly and handicapped dial-a-ride service	688,400
UMTA, Section 5 Commuter rail service	2,200,000
UMTA, Section 18 fixed route service to Gardner and dial-a-ride service	203,000
16 Area Topic Plan (ATP) #1, Leominster reconstruction at 12 locations	2,253,000
17 Route 12, Sterling safety improvements	316,421
18 Route 2, Harvard resurfacing	2,462,000
19 Lunenburg Rd., Lancaster road improvement	201,000
Total	\$22,463,675

During 1982-1983, several major projects were accomplished.

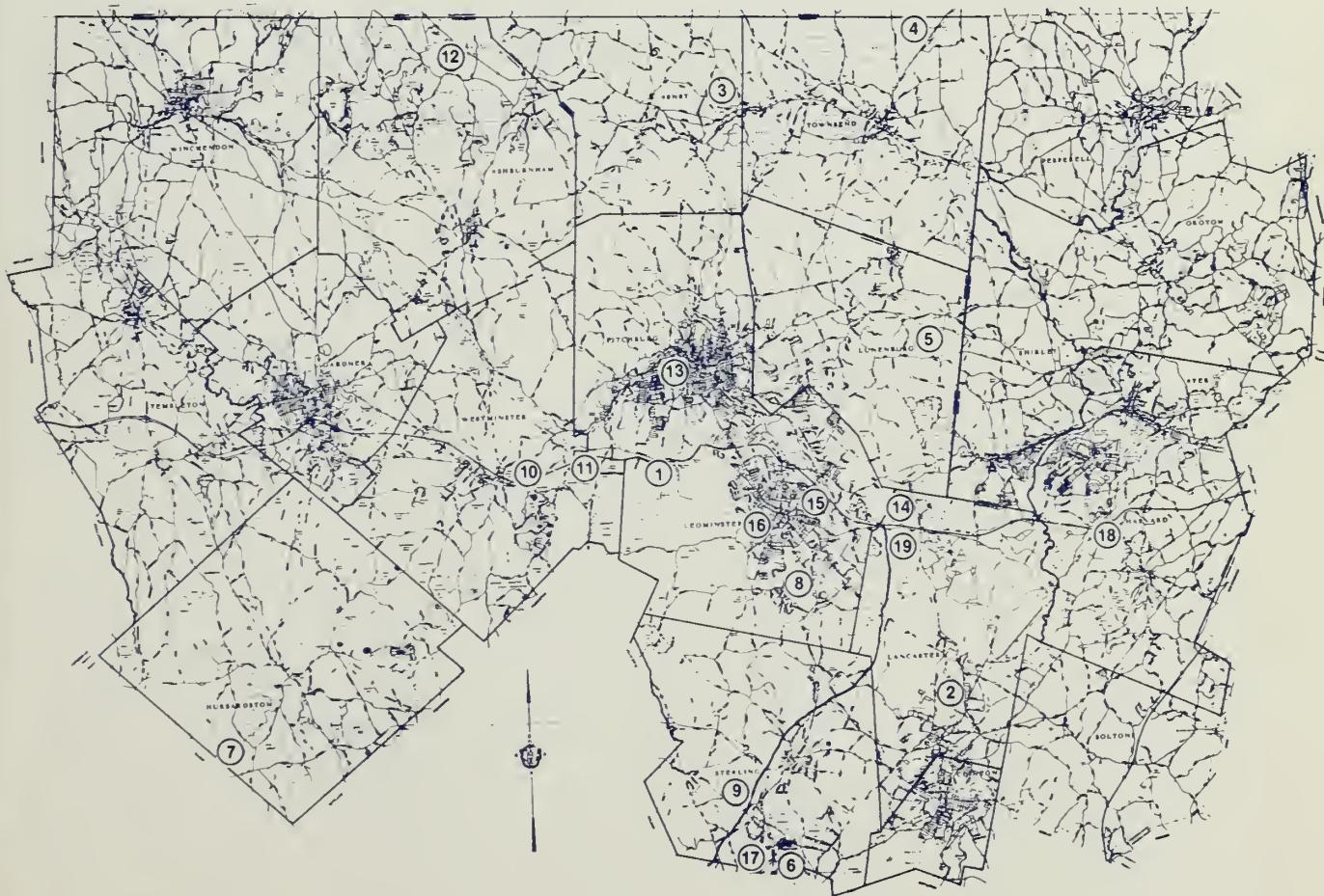
Interstate 190 was completed and opened along its entire length from Worcester to Leominster. Construction of the Route 140 bypass of the Gardner city center has enhanced traffic flow and alleviated excess through traffic in Gardner. Route 2, the Montachusett Region's major east/west facility, was resurfaced from the Leominster/Lancaster town line eastward (6.5 miles) to Route 110 in Harvard. Continued resurfacing of Route 2 from Route 110 (3.5 miles) to I-495 is expected to begin this year. In addition, construction of a new interchange at Route 2 and Route 31 is continuing

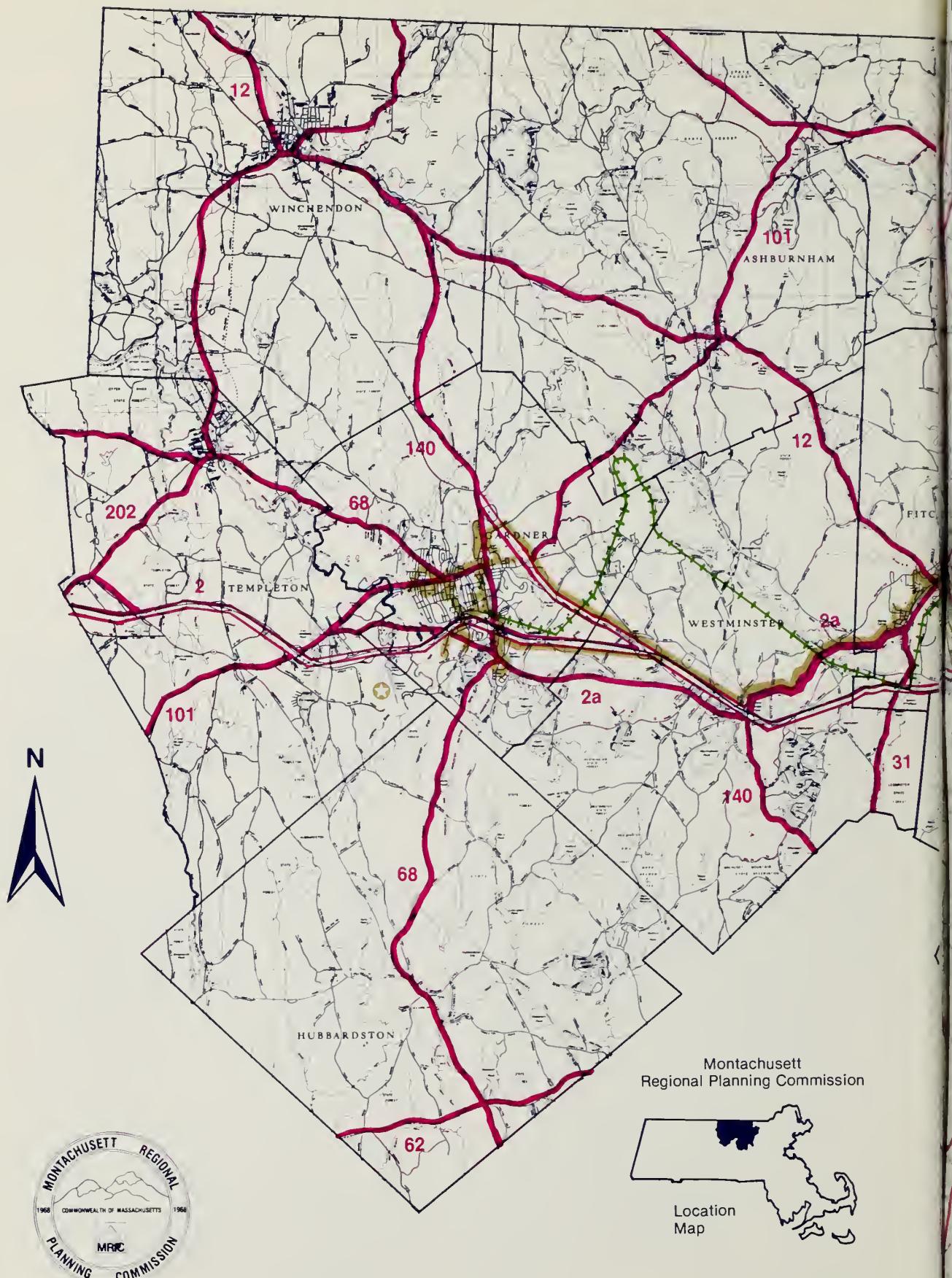
and will improve access and traffic flow in the area.

Of major significance is the proposed Intermodal Transfer Facility to be located in the Fitchburg/Leominster area. Considerable effort has been expended in determining the feasibility of such a facility and the selection of an appropriate site. Coordination with the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, Massachusetts Department of Public Works, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, Montachusett Regional Transit Authority, and the B&M Railroad is on-going and represents a comprehensive approach to the future implementation of this project.

Additional transportation improvements accomplished during 1982-1983 are provided in the adjoining tables.

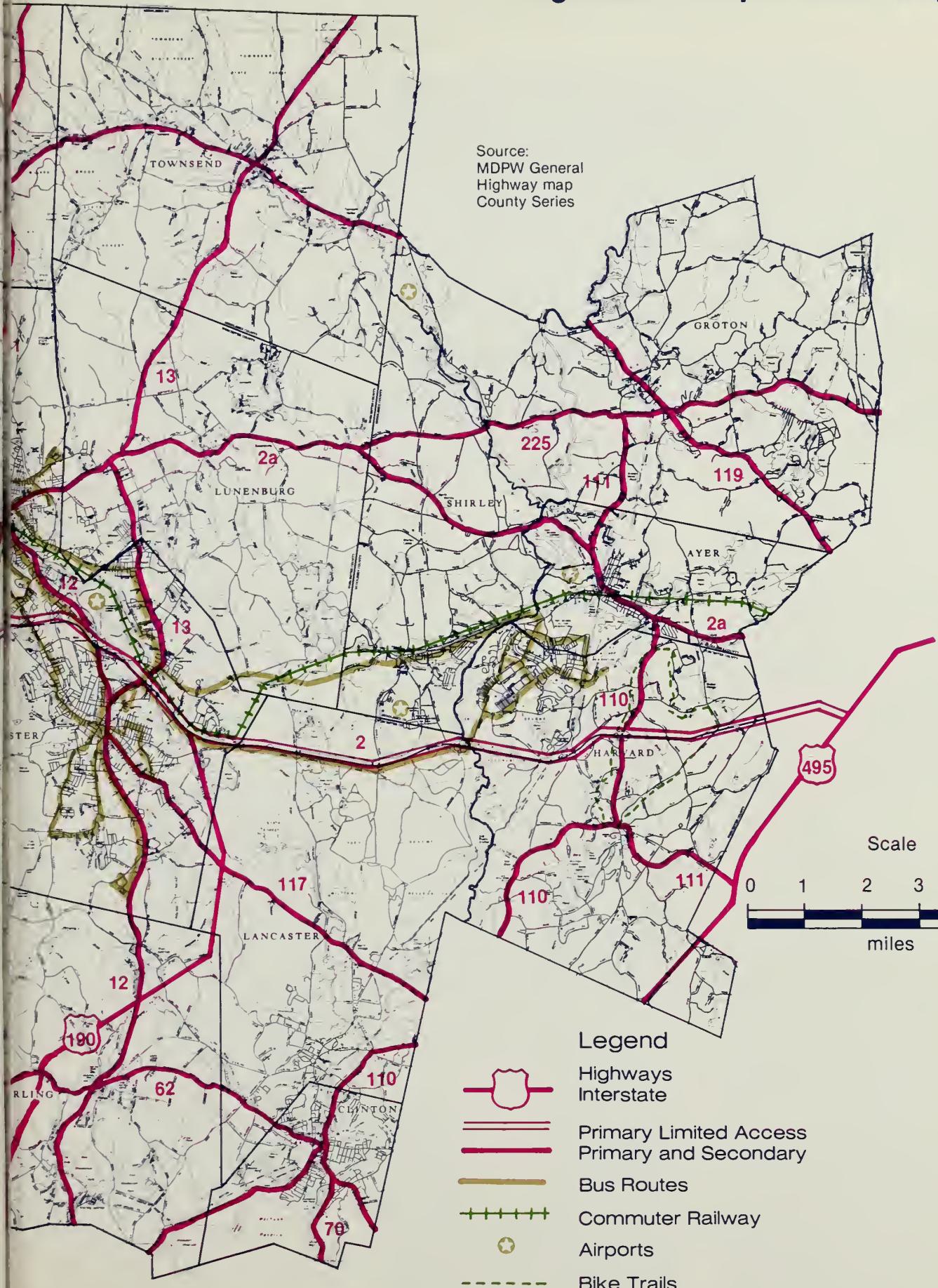
#### Transportation Projects Location 1982 - 1983



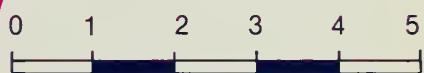


# Regional Transportation Map

Source:  
MDPW General  
Highway map  
County Series



Scale



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## Legend

- Highways Interstate
- Primary Limited Access Primary and Secondary
- Bus Routes
- Commuter Railway
- Airports
- Bike Trails

# The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission



The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission was formed under Chapter 40B of the General Laws of Massachusetts. This State Enabling Act provides for the creation of Regional Planning Commissions by communities of the Commonwealth, and establishes their powers, duties, and financial basis.

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission is not a federal, state or county agency. It is a regional agency created by, and responsible to, its member communities. Its powers are strictly advisory; therefore, it is not a regional government. The seventeen member communities represented on the Commission at this time are: Ashburnham, Ashby, Ayer, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Groton, Hubbardston, Lancaster, Leominster, Lunenburg, Shirley, Sterling, Templeton, Townsend, Westminster, and Winchendon. Fort Devens also participates as a member of the Commission.

The statutory purpose of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission is to carry out comprehensive regional planning.

## Economic Development

This last year the northern Worcester county region suffered a disproportionately high level of unemployment. Once leaders in the plastics, paper and furniture industries, companies are now experiencing significant production and employment cutbacks. In late May of 1983 Americal Hoeschst announced the closing of the Leominster facility. (Over 500 people will lose their jobs.)

While residential utility rates are one of the highest in the country, the region's rates are very high within the State. A resolution to this problem will take a concerted effort on the part of concerned officials at all levels of the government. In response to this regional problem, it is hoped that the State

The following individuals have served on the MRPC during 1982 and 1983. Members are designees of the Planning Board while alternates are appointed by the Mayor with City Council confirmation in a city or appointed by the Board of Selectmen in a town.

### Commission Members

Community	Member	Alternate
Ashburnham	Robert Grubb	Samuel Sutcliffe
Ashby	Walter Woodruff	Harriett Maxant
Ayer	Robert Douglas	Kenneth Dwinells
Clinton	Edward O'Brien	John Naylor
Fitchburg	Joyce Huff	
Fort Devens	Wayne Carlson (NV)	
Gardner	Joseph Zub	Mark Goldstein
Groton	Barbara Laakso	Thomas Hubbard
Hubbardston	Robert Appleton	William Carson
Lancaster	Thomas Nally	Barbara Hubbard
Leominster	Albert Clark	
Lunenburg	Nathaniel Dexter	Richard Neroni
Shirley	Hugo Padovano	Guilio Greco
Sterling	James Mann	Barbara Schnuer
Templeton	Richard Hatch	Robert Goyette
Townsend	Peter Allaire	Dorothy Rockwell
Westminster	Walter Rolf	John Columbus
Winchendon	David Mathieu	Michael Therrien
	Roland Rocheleau	Barry Wyson
	David Landry	Kathleen Fallon
	Donald Royea	

program administrators will give special recognition to this problem during the review of program applications and other requests for assistance.

The already critical housing shortage across the State and region is exacerbated by Fort Devens' need for affordable housing, especially for on-base family units, as an increasing proportion of army personnel are married. While this report does not specifically address regional housing needs and strategies, in addition to Fort Devens, it recognizes the critical needs for housing within the region and supports all efforts which will provide decent affordable housing for all.

Despite these problems, the region has many resources and opportunities, which, alone and in a collaborative effort, can resolve these problems to create what can be a new and highly significant success within the State. Some of these resources include excellent educational institutions, at secondary graduate and post graduate

levels, in professional, vocational and technical fields; a broad social service support sector, and a recognized strong work ethic and labor pool. Together with region-wide natural resources, and recreational opportunities which rival any in the State, and a diversified ethnic heritage base, the region demonstrates the resources and resolves for significant accomplishments in economic development.

The economic development initiatives which were advanced in the report to the Governor in June of 1983 reflect the culmination of a process which began in February 1983, with the "North Central Mass Economic Revival Meeting". Following through on resolves made at that meeting, area legislators, appointed and elected officials and private sector representatives continued a process to identify both problems and opportunities with the region. The concerns of urban and rural areas alike, and of local as well as regional interests were reviewed

and subjected to public discussion. On May 26, 1983, at the Massachusetts Regional Vocational Technical School, a report "Issues For Discussion" was presented. As a result of this public participation process, the report underwent a final revision, which both clarified the issues and established a general consensus to support the major concerns and strategies of this report. All issues and items in this report were presented as priorities, with both local and regional significance and support.

Community and economic development strategies rely on a strong regional partnership together with State recognition and support of the region's unique needs and opportunities. Utilizing the area's excellent educational and social service institutions in developing a modern labor pool and delivery system, and a networking of State and local talent, resources and information, and strong private sector participation, an economic development program will vastly increase the region's competitive capabilities for attracting scarce State and Federal aid as well as new private sector investment.

In June of 1983, Governor Michael Dukakis held an Economic Development Conference at Mount Wachusett Community College. In a report to the Governor, the MRPC and the economic development coalition identified key initiatives in support of economic development. These included greater interaction between State and local agencies, especially in attracting grant funding, increased participation in loan and bond programs, and increased support for our mature industries. There is ample evidence that these initiatives are well underway: the Governor's Task Force on mature industries, co-chaired by Ron Ansin, the Commissioner of Commerce and Development and a native of Fitchburg; the new Private Industry Council (PIC) is very active in developing both employment opportunities and a well trained labor pool; the area's educational institutions are offer-



*from left: MRPC Chairman; Donald Royea, Governor Michael Dukakis, MRPC member Walter Rolf*

ing programs in the high technology field while they continue to provide education in the more traditional areas. At the local level, new SBA 503 and CDC programs are being developed.

The Region's participation in the development of a proposal for a high technology park highlighted the Commission's efforts in this area. This proposal amply demonstrated the region's competitive capabilities, its ability to work in unison, and its abundance of varied resources including buildable land, labor, education and housing, which are necessary for sustained economic growth. At the very least, the State now has a better awareness of the great economic potential in northern Worcester County.

The transportation improvement projects in other sections of this report will provide direct benefits to economic development. However, in the years ahead more emphasis must be given to other infrastructure components, e.g. water and sewer mains, and water resources, if we are to continue our economic achievements. The Commission realized that efforts at local, regional and State levels are necessary to develop an effective strategy for economic growth.

#### **Lancaster Housing Improvement Program**

The goal of the Lancaster Housing Improvement Program was to upgrade the housing condition of the Town's low and moderate income households. To accomplish the goal, a housing rehabilitation program utilizing incentive grants to homeowners was developed. Other components of the program included weatherization and energy conservation, code enforcement, rehabilitation, and financial counseling.

The Lancaster Housing Improvement Program was funded by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The program completed its activities in August of 1983. At the close of the program 67 housing units had been rehabilitated. The total number of low and moderate income individuals who were direct beneficiaries of this program was 146. Of the 67 units rehabilitated, 61 were small family units while six were large family units. Twenty-five elderly units were rehabilitated through the program and eight handicapped units were brought up to the State Sanitary and Building Codes. Fifty percent, or 33 units were occupied by female head of households. Sixteen rental units were also improved through the efforts of the program.

# Community Development



LHIP before improvement



LHIP after improvement

Because public response to the program was initially slow, an extensive campaign to increase awareness and participation was undertaken. Press releases, newspaper ads, and flyers were distributed throughout the community. The Housing Program opened its office for five days rather than the previous four as activity increased. Using the town meeting as a forum, a presentation was made to voters, a display was set up, and flyers were distributed to continue the outreach effort. This process continued on Election Day in May of 1982.

To help increase the activity within the program, HUD agreed to increase the grant amounts to eligible applicants in July of 1982, while the income limits remained the same. This action by HUD substantially increased participation by Lancaster residents. Although the program had originally been scheduled to end in October of 1982, HUD extended the deadline until August of 1983.

With these changes in the program, more interest and participation was generated from the community. Homeowners whose property had been rehabilitated through the program served as our best source of advertisement. They were pleased to see their home receiving needed improvements that they would have been unable to do on their own.

Rural Housing Improvement, Inc. (RHI), conducted the preliminary, intermediate, and final inspections of the properties being rehabilitated. When meetings were held with homeowners identifying necessary items that had to be brought up to Code, RHI staff often provided technical assistance to the homeowner. In cases where the homeowner was adept at home repair, they were encouraged to enter into a "sweat equity" agreement with the town. The homeowner would provide the labor at no cost and the town would finance the cost of materials.

At the close of the program, many individuals were enjoying the benefits of improved housing as a result of this program. Some of the reasons for its ultimate success were the support and cooperation of the Board of Selectmen, assistance of the Citizens Advisory Group, the Lancaster Housing Authority, and a positive attitude of participating town residents.

## Housing Technical Advisory Committee

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission has also provided the Housing Technical Advisory Committee with staff support.

Established in early 1971, the Housing Technical Advisory Committee fulfills a variety of functions. Among these, the Housing Technical Advisory Committee serves to promote the achievement of safe, sanitary, and adequate housing for every household in the Region. As well, it serves as a clearinghouse for information, technical assistance, and the like, such as disseminating information on programs currently available to cities, towns, and individuals as requested, participating in A-95 reviews, and clarifying and amplifying the housing needs in the area.

Membership to the Housing Technical Advisory Committee consists of delegates and alternates chosen annually from each of the following groups: local housing authorities, community action committees, non-profit housing groups, regional, state, and federal housing agencies, community interest groups, housing related private associations, housing related municipal agencies (housing code enforcement agencies, planning boards, health boards, planning departments), and appointees of boards of selectmen and mayors with confirmation of the city council.

### Ayer UDAG

In May of 1982, the New England Milling Company, a subsidiary of the Prince Company, Inc., was awarded an Urban Development Action Grant for over one million dollars. The grant was prepared by the MRPC, which was later selected as the grant administrator. According to the Boston Globe, this is the first mill to be constructed in Massachusetts in this century.

This mill will process wheat to produce semolina flour, which in turn, will be used to produce spaghetti products at the company's headquarters in Lowell. The project will create approximately 130 new jobs, and contribute over 10 million private dollars in construction and machinery costs. The project also utilizes a new rail spur and roadway, funded in part by the State.

The MRPC is pleased to be working on this project, and acknowledges the excellent cooperation and construction progress achieved by the Prince Company, Inc.

### Ayer Jobs Fund

In October of 1983, the Town of Ayer was successful in applying for a jobs fund grant for \$400,000 to improve drainage and to reconstruct sidewalks on Main Street. In addition, employment counseling would be provided. The grant demonstrates the Town's successful efforts in attracting State and Federal funds.

This project is expected to be a focal point for major economic development efforts, especially on Main Street, and should go a long way in revitalizing this community.

### Winchendon Small Cities Program

The Town of Winchendon was the recipient of a Massachusetts Small Cities Program grant in July of 1983 from the Executive Office of Communities and Development in the amount of \$162,500. The town is loaning \$152,500 to Sanborn Wood Products, Inc., an architectural woodworking company located in Winchendon Springs.

The money will be used to undertake fixed asset improvements at the Glenallan Mill. As a result of this loan, Sanborn will be able to increase its production capability, provide more job opportunities, and expand the town's tax base. The remaining \$10,000 will be used for administration and audit.

At the close of the calendar year 1983, 40% of the work had been completed, and work was proceeding rapidly. In October, the MRPC was hired to administer the grant. This administration included monitoring of David-Bacon wages, preparation of status reports and requisitions, meetings with the Building Inspector and Town Manager to discuss progress at Sanborn, and overall management of the grant.

Funds at Sanborn are being utilized for a multi-fuel furnace which will convert wood waste into energy, upgrading of the electrical system, interior and exterior repairs, and window replacement and repair.

### Leominster CDAG

In October of 1983, the City of Leominster was awarded a Community Development Action Grant in the amount of \$650,000 to provide roadways, sewers, water, and drainage to serve Tucker Housewares and Near East Food Products. The grant was prepared by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission. The project will enable Tucker to combine local manufacturing operations within one site on Francis Street. Total investment by Tucker would be approximately \$9 million dollars and create an estimated 35 permanent jobs. Near East Food Products, with an investment of about \$2 million, will also utilize the new lines and roadway, and create about 18 additional jobs.

The project is off to an excellent start and will undoubtedly add significantly to Leominster's economic development accomplishments.



**Sanborn Wood Products, Inc., Winchendon**

# **Environmental Planning**



## **Resource Recovery**

Under the chairmanship of Mr. Dennis Brailey, the Resource Recovery Committee continues to tackle the issue of solid waste disposal. A climactic but short-lived event occurred in 1983, when the City of Fitchburg selected Consumat Corporation to develop a resource recovery facility.

However, because of some uncertainties in long term commitments for steam generation, local neighborhood opposition to the proposed site, and more favorable rates for electrical generation in other areas, the facility was not constructed in Fitchburg.

The Committee continues to meet once each month to exchange ideas and information on scale programs, transfer stations, resource recovery technology and other related issues. As communities' availability of landfill capacity diminished, the work of this committee will become increasingly critical in the years ahead.

## **Wachusett Mountain Advisory Council**

The MRPC continued its participation on the Wachusett Mountain Advisory Council, which advises officials on the operation of the ski area on state reservation land in Princeton.

1982 saw the construction of a new multi-million dollar facility financed by Wachusett Mountain Associates, with a 30 year concessionaires lease. This new facility promotes the concept of day skiing. A ski train from Boston, together with a MART shuttle bus, will further expand user potential.

Initially, the program had to resolve many local environmental issues: soils conservation, water quality protection of Wachusett Lake, and traffic impacts in the Town of Princeton. For a time, Phase II construction was uncertain until assurances and water quality monitoring measures were implemented. Some issues still need to be resolved. During the 1983 ski season the resort experienced capacity crowds which exceeded expectations. In many respects, this project demonstrates the excellent opportunities for the Department of Environmental Management and the private sector in providing quality public recreation opportunities.

Much work lies ahead for this council. Adverse local impacts, parking requirements and future expansions must be resolved in the near future.

# Local Technical Assistance



## Local Technical Assistance

During 1983, MRPC provided technical assistance to the following communities:

### Ashburnham

- assisted in revising the town's subdivision regulations.
- assisted local officials on a house numbering and street naming system.
- assisted Ashburnham's Fire Chief in the future development of a master plan for the Fire Department.

### Ashby

- provided 1980 census information and pertinent information on Federal and State sources of funding for community development.
- assisted Ashby in determining the cost effectiveness of participating in a Joint Purchasing Program with other communities.
- compiled accident statistics for intersections and roadways in Ashby as part of the MRPC Regional Accident Study.

### Ayer

- administered the Ayer Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) for the future construction of the New England Milling Company.
- assisted the Ayer Revitalization Committee to formulate a plan for the utilization of UDAG funds.
- obtained the administrative component of the Ayer Jobs Fund, which will create jobs and provide for public facility improvements.

### Clinton

- assisted the Clinton Board of Selectmen and Chamber of Commerce for the identification of major employees to be surveyed by MRPC for determining the transit needs of the community. This information will be used by MRPC to coordinate the implementation of bus service by the Worcester Regional Transit Authority.

- compiled accident statistics for intersections and roadways in Clinton as part of the MRPC Regional Accident Study.

### Fitchburg

- completed the Route 12 Traffic Operations Study to develop a program of short-range improvements to Route 12 in Fitchburg.
- conducted analysis of traffic impacts on Princeton Road (Route 31) south of Route 2 in Fitchburg.
- conducted traffic and accident analysis for traffic signal improvements to intersection at Water St./Fifth St., Laurel St./Kimball St./Putnam St./Cross St., and John Fitch Highway/Pearl St.
- conducted traffic analysis for Hotel/Office Park Complex proposed at Route 2 and 31.
- assisted City of Fitchburg for the selection and evaluation of a proposal for a Resource Recovery Facility.

### Gardner

- assisted the Gardner Historic Commission for the placement of the Heywood-Wakefield Buildings to the National Register of Historic Places.
- assisted local city officials in site selection proposals for the Massachusetts High Tech Park.
- assisted the Gardner Airport in obtaining funds for an Airport Master Plan.

### Groton

- provided 1980 census information and pertinent information on Federal and State sources of funding for community development.
- assisted Groton in determining the cost effectiveness of participating in a Joint Purchasing Program with other communities.
- compiled accident statistics for intersections and roadways in Groton as part of the MRPC Regional Accident Study.

### Hubbardston

- developed a grant application for a Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Program through the Massachusetts Small Cities Program. Although the town was not successful in this grant, application for a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) 202 grant for construction of a housing facility that would provide for 36 elderly and handicapped tenants was successful.

### Lancaster

- completed the administration of the Lancaster Housing Program. At the close of the program, 67 housing units had been rehabilitated through a Community Development Block Grant from HUD.
- conducted a traffic analysis of Route 117 in the North Village Area.

### Leominster

- prepared and administered a \$650,000 Community Development Action Grant (CDAG) for the City which would provide funds for road construction, sewer, and water facilities near Route 117. This area will be the site of new construction for two industries: Tucker Housewares and Near East Food Products, Inc. These two industries will increase job opportunities and expand the tax base of Leominster.
- prepared a Community Profile and Economic Development Study for the City
- developed a Watershed Protection Zoning Ordinance

### Lunenburg

- prepared a Jobs Fund application to provide \$307,000 worth of neighborhood based recreation opportunities to low income families, elderly, and youth within the community.
- assisted the town in negotiating agreements with the Executive Office of Community Development for affirmative housing.

### **Shirley**

- prepared a grant application for an Aquifer Land Acquisition Program to assist the Shirley Village Water District acquire land to protect existing and potential well sites.
- assisted Town in preparing an application for a Jobs Fund Program to develop a multi-service recreation center.

### **Sterling**

- prepared a report entitled "Analysis of Changes in Traffic on Route 12 and I-190 in the Town of Sterling", which is concerned with changes and impacts that have occurred since the opening of I-190.
- produced two reports containing traffic volume and accident data for Route 140 and the Dana Hill Road area.
- reviewed the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

### **Templeton**

- targeted major employers in Templeton for inclusion into the Transit Development Program Update to determine transit needs of the Town.
- surveyed high accident locations in Town over a three year period.

### **Townsend**

- conducted intersection assessment at Route 119 (Main Street) at South and Spaulding Streets to determine the optimal traffic control strategy.
- provided information on 1980 census data pertinent for the development of funding assistance.

### **Westminster**

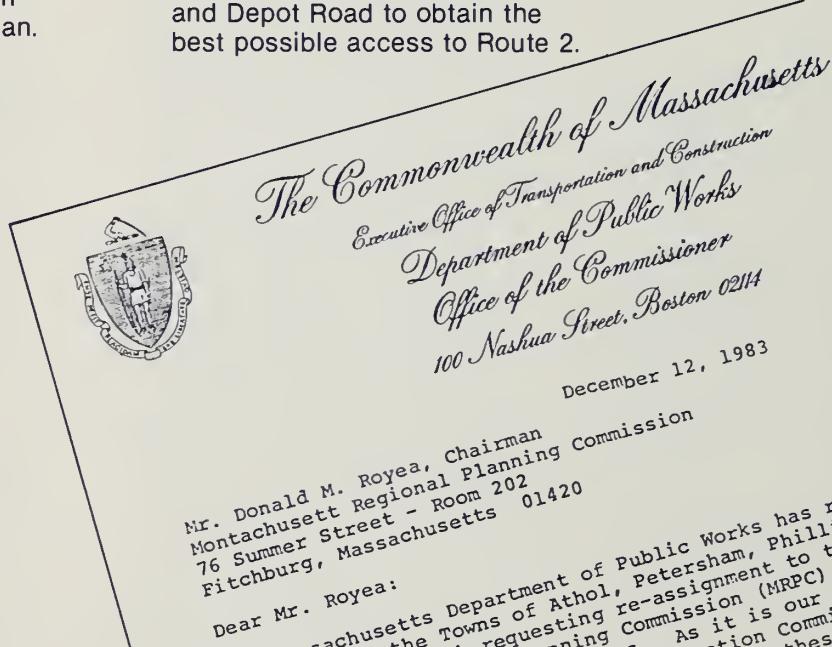
- coordinated with the Town on the proposed design for Route 2 reconstruction at Narrows Road and Depot Road to obtain the best possible access to Route 2.

### **Winchendon**

- administered small cities grant of \$162,500 from Executive Office of Communities and Development for renovation of Sanborn Wood Products, Inc.

### **MART**

- MRPC provided the administrative and technical services for the MART operation.
- assisted in the site selection process for the MART garage and Intermodal Facility.
- MRPC staff are conducting an overall TDP study which will include fixed route service as well as elderly/handicapped services, and commuter rail.



### **Reassignment of new towns:**

#### **Athol Petersham Phillipston Royalston**

- integrated these four towns into the 3C transportation planning process.

**Montachusett Regional Planning Commission  
Balance Sheet**

June 30, 1983

**ASSETS**

Cash	\$14,492
Accounts Receivable	
Federal grants	8,355
State grants	19,766
Local contracts	26,727
Assessments	356
Sundry	250
Total Accounts Receivable	55,454
Prepaid Expenses	1,325
Office Furniture and Equipment	23,831
Less: accumulated depreciation	14,924
Net Fixed Assets	8,907
Total Assets	\$80,178

**LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE**

Accounts Payable	\$8,998
Accrued Payroll	4,482
Accrued Expenses	2,975
Contract Advances	38,561
Total Liabilities	55,016
Fund Balance	25,162
Total Liabilities and Fund Balance	\$80,178

**Montachusett Regional Planning Commission  
Statement of Resources and Expenditures and Fund Balance**

For the Year Ended June 30, 1983

Resources:	
Federal grants	\$ 38,053
State grants	83,743
Local contracts	90,404
Local assessments	34,488
In-kind services	6,336
Other local revenues	828
Total Resources	253,852
Expenditures	
Direct salaries	110,612
Direct fringe benefits	18,835
Indirect costs	111,443
Printing	163
Travel	2,782
In-kind services	6,336
Consultants	8,555
Interest expense	661
Total Expenditures	259,387
Excess of Resources over Expenditures	(5,535)
Fund Balance - Beginning	29,443
	23,908
Adjustments (Note 4)	1,254
Fund Balance - End	\$25,162

# **Future Planning Efforts**



## **Future Planning Efforts**

### **Intermodal Transfer Facility**

Based upon a growing demand for bus and rail service in the region, the MRPC responded to requests by the Fitchburg Planning Department and the Fitchburg Chamber of Commerce to study the feasibility of constructing an Intermodal Transfer/Maintenance Facility in the Fitchburg-Leominster area. This project would involve combining a major terminal/transfer facility accomodating all modes of transportation. Primary bus operations and maintenance facility for MART will be located in the existing Fitchburg/Leominster garage building on Route 12. The combined cost of these two facilities is estimated at four million dollars. In conjunction with the Fitchburg In-town Revitalization Program, the addition of a major intermodal transfer/maintenance facility would centralize and improve transportation access to employment, business, and shopping, while adding to the overall attractiveness of the region.

### **Reassignment of Four Towns**

The Towns of Athol, Petersham, Phillipston and Royalston each requested to be included in the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission for transportation planning purposes. This request was formally approved by the Massachusetts Department of Public Works and the Planning Commission in December, 1983. Work will begin immediately to incorporate these new areas into the regional transportation planning process and provide needed transportation technical assistance to these communities.

### **Winchendon Transportation Study**

Since the recent completion of the Route 140 bypass, Winchendon town officials and businesses have become increasingly concerned with traffic impacts on the center of town, especially truck traffic. As a result, the Board of Selectmen has requested that MRPC conduct a traffic analysis for Winchendon that would detail existing problems and develop alternative solutions.

### **Main St./Route 117 Study in Lancaster**

This assessment of Route 117 in Lancaster is being conducted at the request of the town to investigate possible traffic operation improvements in the North Village area of Lancaster. Heavy traffic on Route 117, particularly truck traffic, has aroused concern about the safety of pedestrian, auto, and truck traffic.

### **Safety Studies - John Fitch Highway/Bemis Road**

The segment of roadway including John Fitch Highway and Bemis Road in Fitchburg was placed second on a list of hazardous locations by the Regional Accident Study recently completed by MRPC. The objective of this study is to investigate the causes of accidents at hazardous locations such as John Fitch Highway and Bemis Road. The results will then be used in order to develop needed improvements at these locations. Recommendations will be presented to the Massachusetts Department of Public Works for future implementation.

### **Route 2/13 Interchange Study**

A study will be prepared addressing the traffic problems at the intersection of Routes 2 and 13. The MRPC will assess the merits of previous studies and recommendations conducted by MRPC and the Massachusetts Department of Public Works in order to prioritize possible solutions.

**For further information regarding this report, please contact the MRPC at 345-7376.**



*State Route 140, Gardner*



Montachusett Regional Planning Commission  
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